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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a lecture on behavior modification techniques given to three elementary teaching staffs that were volunteered by their principals. It was expected that the group lecture would result in significant increases of teacher compliments and decreases of teacher reprimands even though the teachers did not request the lecture directly. These changes in teacher response to student behavior were then expected to be reflected in increases of the percent of students observed to be engaged with the assigned task in each classroom. Thirty-four teachers selected randomly from three elementary schools were observed for ten minutes one week before and three weeks after receiving the behavior modification lecture. The results indicated that the rate of teachers' compliments increased and reprimands decreased significantly following the lecture on behavior modification. The results, therefore, indicate that students' classroom functioning can be changed by teachers' application of behavior modification techniques. (Author)

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EFFECTS OF A BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION LECTURE ON TEACHERS' RATE OF COMPLIMENTS AND REPRIMANDS, AND THEIR STUDENTS' TIME-ON-TASK

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During the last ten years, behavior modification techniques based on operant learning theory have evolved from animal studies in the laboratory to human subject studies in residential treatment centers and public school special education classes (Altman and Linton, 1971). Within the last several years, treatment based on operant learning theory has been applied on problem pupils within regular classrooms with striking success (Hall, Lund, and Jackson, 1968; Madsen, Becker and Thomas, 1968). Such treatment techniques, when incorporated into teachers' general management techniques of a class, also seem to improve the amount of on-task behavior of those entire classes (Thomas, Becker and Armstrong, 1968; Madsen, Becker, Thomas, Koser and Plager, 1969; Hall, Panyan, Rabon and Broden, 1968).

Recently, research has begun evaluating various means of training teachers in the use of behavior modification techniques. One study by Kosier and Severson (1971) has suggested that teachers are able to implement behavior modification techniques after receiving group lectures without the more extensive individual consultation procedures usually employed. The results of that study, however, cannot be generalized beyond the sample of teachers who volunteered for the professional advancement inservice course. Many of these teachers were observed to be exceptionally competent before treatment and overly cooperative and very competitive with each other during treatment.

The present study will evaluate the effectiveness of a behavior modification lecture given to the teaching staffs of three entire schools that were volunteered by their principals. It is expected that the group lecture will result in significant increases

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of teacher compliments and decreases of teacher reprimands even though the teachers did not request the lecture directly. These changes in teacher response to student behavior are then expected to be reflected in increases of the percent of students observed to be engaged with the assigned task in each classroom.

Procedures

Thirty-four teachers selected randomly from three elementary schools were observed for ten minutes one week before and three weeks after receiving the behavior modification lecture. The post-tests were made at the exact same time of day as the pre-tests and the classroom activity within each class was observed to be the same in all but two instances. The principals of all three schools participated in a fourteen hour inservice course on behavior modification before requesting the inservice lecture for their teachers. The lecture and handouts that were used during the inservice program can be found in appendices A - D.

Discussion of Results

The results in table 1 indicate that the rate of teachers' compliments increased and reprimands decreased significantly following the lecture on behavior modification. These changes in teacher behavior were then reflected in significant improvement in their students' time-on-task. The results, therefore, indicate that students' classroom functioning can be changed by teachers' application of behavior modification techniques even if they haven't volunteered individually to participate in the inservice program. In fact, the changes effected in this study were slightly greater than those obtained in the study by Kosier and Severson (1971) who employed five sessions rather than one session.

A number of uncontrolled factors, however, may have offset the "volunteer" factor and accounted for the slight improvements. It may be recalled that the principals of each of the schools in the present study had volunteered and participated in a professional

advancement credit inservice course offered by this author previous to requesting the behavior modification lecture for their teachers. This study also had the advantage of greater experience and confidence by the lecturer. It was further noted that teachers had greater opportunity to share testimonials of success, since they were all in the same buildings every day.

At any rate, it appears that psychologists should not fear futility when asked to make a "one-shot" speech to a staff of teachers who want to know something about those new behavior modification techniques. Although one lecture can barely begin to convey all the teachers need to know about applications of operant learning theory, one lecture of the type described in this paper can make a difference with some students. The informal feedback that this writer has received from teachers suggests that the preliminary improvements in students noted thus far have encouraged these teachers to seek more information about learning theories and to experiment with new applications for various kinds of problem-pupil behavior.

Table 1

Effects of Behavior Modification

Lecture on Students and Teachers

	Before Lecture	After Lecture	t	p Less Than
Teacher Compliments per 10 minutes	2.2	8.6	4.67	.001
Teacher Reprimands per 10 minutes	3.7	1.2	5.53	.001
Percent of Students On-Task	82.7	91.3	3.45	.001

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